

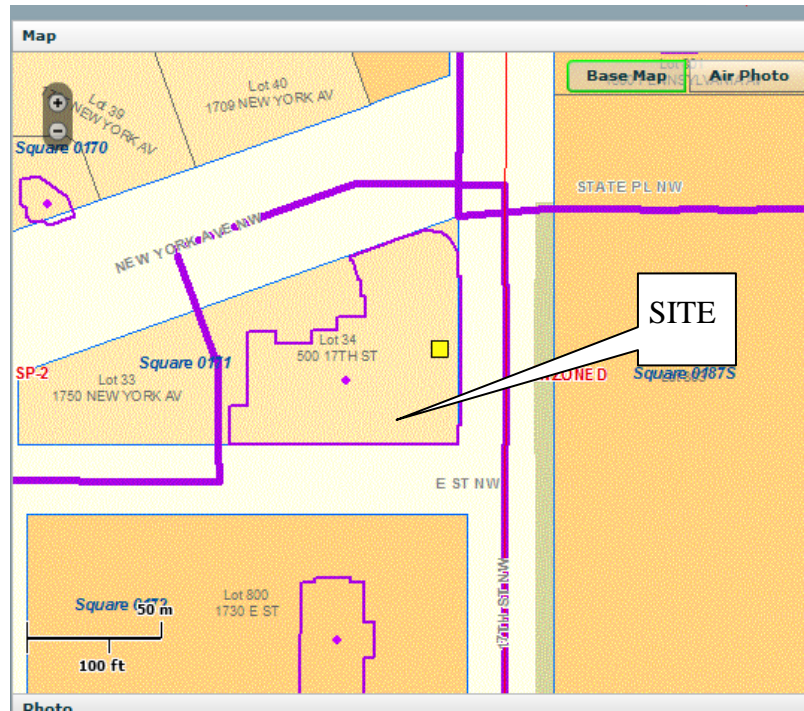
**MEMORANDUM****TO:** District Board of Zoning Adjustment**FROM:** Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director Development Review & Historic Preservation**DATE:** June 19, 2012**SUBJECT: BZA 18227A –1700 New York Avenue NW – Corcoran Gallery of Art****I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION**

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of variance relief from the parking requirements to provide 39 parking spaces in lieu of 44 spaces previously approved by BZA Order 18227.

**II. AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION**

<b>Address:</b>	500 17 <sup>th</sup> Street NW /1700 New York Avenue, NW
<b>Legal Description:</b>	Square 171, Lot 34
<b>Ward:</b>	Ward 2, ANC-2A
<b>Zoning:</b>	SP-2
<b>Lot Characteristics:</b>	The lot is irregularly shaped and contains 68,231 square feet of land area. The property is improved with the Corcoran Gallery of Art (Corcoran), a historic landmark, and an accessory surface parking lot. The Gallery is an irregularly-shaped building with 125,545 square feet of gross floor area and occupies approximately seventy percent of the lot.
<b>Adjacent Properties:</b>	West: The Corcoran is adjacent to the United Unions Building, with frontage on E Street, 17 <sup>th</sup> Street and New York Avenue. North: Across NY Ave –FDIC and AIA offices South: Across E Street – American Red Cross Headquarters East: Across 17 <sup>th</sup> Street- Ellipse and the Old Executive Office Building
<b>Neighborhood Character:</b>	The Corcoran is located within the Central Employment Area (CEA) and among several private and federal office buildings.





Site Location

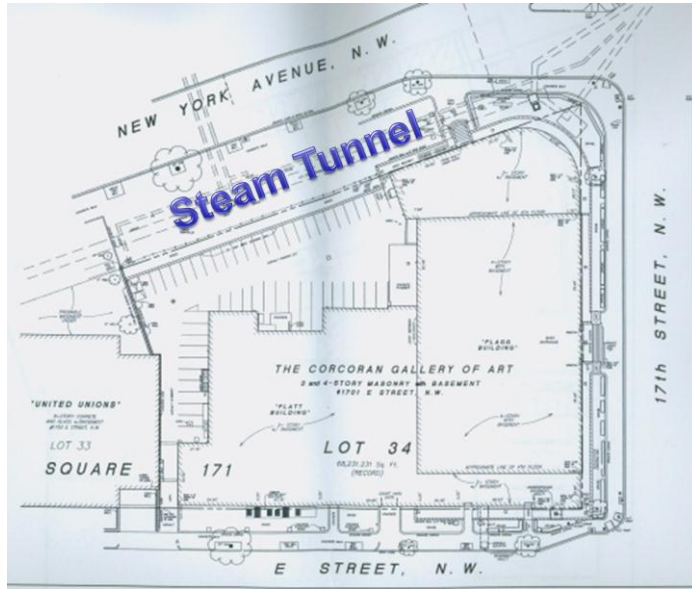


#### IV. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

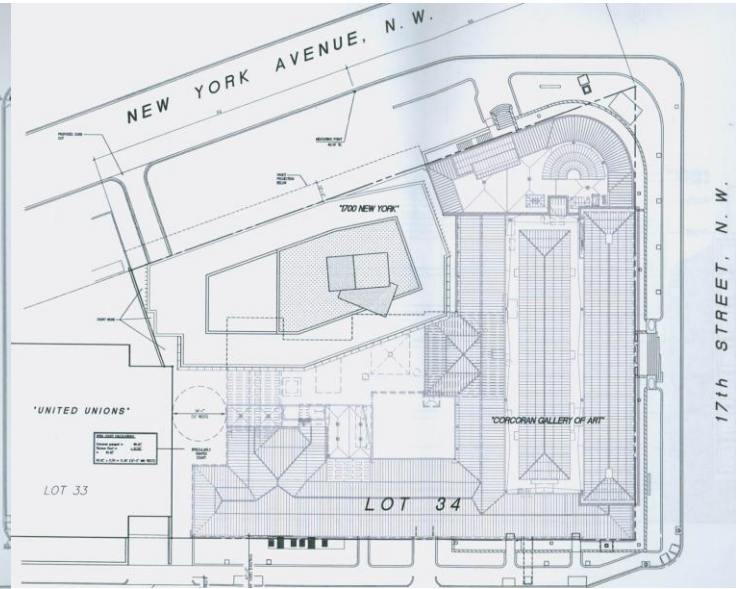
The property is located in the Seventeenth Street Historic District and is listed as the Corcoran, a landmarked building.

## V. PROPOSAL

The applicant received BZA relief to facilitate the construction of an eight-story office addition to the rear of the historic resource in the area of the existing 20-space surface parking.



**Existing Site Plan**



**Proposed Site Plan**

BZA Order 18227, dated June 24, 2011, approved special exception relief pursuant to Section 508 to permit the office use in the SP District, and variance relief from § 2101 for 43 zoning compliant spaces, in addition to 39 non-compliant spaces.

During preparation of the approved construction drawings, it was discovered that the conditions that limited the below-grade excavation and resulting layout of the parking facilities identified in the original variance application were more difficult than previously thought. Specifically, the GSA Steam Tunnel that runs along New York Avenue would further limit excavation within a portion of the proposed vault space, and an additional egress stair would be required due to modification in the excavation area.

These changes, which are based on the same facts as was originally presented to the BZA, would result in the additional loss of ten on-site parking spaces, thereby reducing the number of compliant on-site spaces from 43 to 38, and the total number of on-site spaces from 82 to 72 as summarized in the following table:

Parking Requirement - § 2101	Approved Variance Relief	Current Request
83 on-site spaces	43 spaces 1 compact space 38 tandem and /or vault spaces <b>Total = 82 spaces</b>	<b>38 spaces</b> <b>1 compact space</b> <b>33 tandem and / or vault spaces</b> <b>Total = 72 spaces</b>

## VI. ANALYSIS

### VARIANCE

#### i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The property exhibits several characteristics which create a unique and exceptional situation, including:

- The Corcoran's gravel foundation.
- The existing building related improvements which are mounted to exterior walls.
- The encroachment of the Union Building on the Corcoran's property.

- The property's historic landmark designation and its required separation between the proposed addition and the United Union Building.
- The site's nine-foot grade difference from north to south.
- The location of GSA's steam tunnel fifteen feet and parallel to the New York Avenue property line.

The factors identified above, in combination with *additional information regarding the limitations presented by the Steam Tunnel's location*, subsequent to the Board's original approval, present a practical difficulty in the ability for the applicant in providing the approved number of on-site parking spaces.

#### Parking

The garage is restricted because the building area of the addition is hemmed in between the historic resource and the General Service Administration's (GSA) steam tunnel. It was submitted to the Board that excavation beyond the proposed levels would be difficult and costly as the Corcoran sits on a gravel foundation and further excavation would be detrimental to the historic source. This continues to be the case.

Subsequently, during preparation of the approved construction drawings, it was discovered that conditions that the already limited below-grade excavation within a portion of the proposed vault space was underestimated. The resulting redesign of the below grade garage now requires:

- An additional egress stair due to Building Code requirements.
- Changes to the ramping to allow for a code compliant garage exhaust, expansion of the sump pump system; and
- Elimination of two zoning compliant spaces and a non-zoning space, while allowing for a compact space on the third level below grade.

The exceptional situation created by the Steam Tunnel's location and the site's limitations continue to present a practical difficulty for the applicant in providing the approved number of on-site parking spaces. The existing building's lot occupancy leaves a small irregularly-shaped footprint within which to accommodate below-grade parking. These factors in combination with the nine-foot grade change would require the garage's ramping system to consume much of the area for the provision of zoning-compliant spaces. Thus, the previously approved number of parking spaces would need to be further reduced.

#### **ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good**

It is not anticipated that the minimal reduction in the number of approved parking spaces would be detrimental to the public good as the site is located downtown with a variety of transit options. In addition, the applicant has committed to TDM<sup>1</sup> measures outlined in its original application to encourage trip reduction by employees. Bicycling will be promoted with the provision of 17 on-site bicycle parking spaces, and on-site showers for bicyclists. Current regulations require the provision of 4 bicycle spaces.

While the provision of vault parking spaces in public space are not included in the number of required spaces, their provision would supplement the required and provide sufficient parking to serve the employees of the gallery and the new office addition. Therefore, this reduction is not anticipated to have a substantial detriment to the public good.

#### **iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations**

The proposed office building would augment the pattern of uses in area. Therefore, the additional parking relief requested would not impair the intent of the Regulations as there is no change in the material facts upon which the Board made its original decision.

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<sup>1</sup> Information attached, provided by the applicant's traffic study of May 20, 2011

## **VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

The Advisory neighborhood Commission, ANC 2A voted unanimously to approve the further reduction in the number of approved spaces at its regularly held meeting on March 21, 2012.

## **VIII. AGENCY COMMENTS**

The District Department of Transportation's report dated June 13, 2012 expressed no objection to the variance request.

## **IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The applicant has incorporated the addition and its related parking with the historic resource in a manner that respects the historic character of the Corcoran Gallery's Beaux Arts building. The minimal reduction of the previously approved number of on-site parking spaces would not adversely affect the historic resource or the on-street parking supply in the transit-accessible downtown area. OP therefore recommends approval of the requested variance relief to facilitate the construction of the approved office addition.

## **ATTACHMENT**

TDM Measures (**Gorove/Slade Transportation Impact Study, May 20, 2011. *Page 29***)

## **ATTACHMENT**

### **Operational TDM Strategies**

The recommendations promote travel modes that will have the least impact on the transportation network and discourage those that have the greatest impact.

- **Transportation Services Coordinator**

Effective TMPs require a coordinator to implement and manage TDM strategies. A member of the property management group would be a point of contact and would be responsible for coordinating, implementing and monitoring the TMP strategies. This would include the development and distribution of informational and promotional brochures to visitors, patrons and employees regarding transit facilities and services, walk and bicycle facilities and linkages, ridesharing (carpool and vanpool) and car sharing.

- **Marketing Program**

The Transportation Services Coordinator will establish a TDM marketing program that provides detailed transportation information and promotes walking, cycling and transit. An effective marketing strategy should consist of a multi-modal access guide that provides comprehensive transportation information. This information will be included as part of a prominent tenant directory located in the lobby of the building. The marketing program should also utilize existing resources such as [www.GODCGO.com](http://www.GODCGO.com), which provides transportation information and options for getting around the District.

- **Bicycle Amenities**

The developer will encourage all alternative transportation modes including bicycling. Bicycling will be promoted with the provision of 17 on-site bicycle parking spaces described above as well as on-site showers for bicyclists. The marketing program will include brochures on bicycling in the District and for Capital Bikeshare.

- **Ride-matching/Ridesharing Program**

Employees who wish to carpool would be provided detailed carpooling information as part of the marketing effort and will also be referred to other carpool matching services sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government.

These TDM strategies could result in additional traffic reductions beyond what has previously been assumed.